
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NUMBER SEVENTY-THREE (2008)

THE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON IMMIGRATION

The foreign-born population in Virginia has been growing significantly over the past two decades. Between 1990 and 2000 there was an 83% increase in the foreign-born population living in Virginia. As of 2005, the Commonwealth's foreign-born population reached 677,400 people accounting for 8.95% of Virginia's total population. Additionally, Virginia ranks eleventh in the nation for the size of their foreign-born population.

When examining the issue of illegal immigration it is important that we enforce the laws of the nation and the Commonwealth, while also addressing the fiscal and public safety consequences. It is equally important to recognize the many positive benefits of legal immigration to the Commonwealth's economy, culture, and quality of life. Additionally, some of Virginia's largest industries, such as agriculture, are dependent on immigrant workers. It must be ensured that legislative actions do not punish law-abiding business owners or hurt their ability to grow and create jobs.

It is challenging to maintain a manageable system of allowing legal immigration without undue delays, and to avoid overbroad solutions that stigmatize entire communities and hurt Virginia's economy. That the federal government has failed in their duty to adequately address illegal immigration is certain. No one disputes that policies governing United States citizenship are best handled by the federal government.

Mindful of the importance of gaining a better understanding of how this growing population is affecting the Commonwealth, and by virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor under Article V of the Constitution of Virginia and under the laws of the Commonwealth, including but not limited to Section § 2.2-134 of the *Code of Virginia*, and subject to my continuing and ultimate authority and responsibility to act in such matters, I hereby authorize the creation of the Governor's Commission on Immigration.

The Commission shall be classified as an advisory commission within the meaning of § 2.2-2100 in the executive branch of state government.

The Commission shall study the costs and benefits that immigration is having on the Commonwealth. Areas of study shall include, but not be limited to the impact immigration has on the economy, public benefits, education, public safety, employment, health care, and law enforcement. All findings shall be reported to the Governor and the General Assembly.

Additionally, the Commission shall examine the effect federal immigration laws have on the Commonwealth, and address the Virginia Congressional Delegation on what issues have been identified that need to be addressed that are federally preempted. Furthermore, public hearings in various regions of the Commonwealth will be held to solicit input from Virginia's citizens on the impact immigration is having in their communities. Finally, the Commission shall examine the tax contributions of the immigrant population on both the state and federal levels.

The Commission shall consist of 20 members who meet the following criteria: five members of the House of Delegates; three members of the Senate of Virginia; two citizen representatives with business, education, health care or law enforcement experience; a naturalized citizen who is a resident of the Commonwealth; a resident of the Commonwealth who holds a permanent resident visa issued by the United States Department of State; a representative of a faith-based organization providing services to immigrants; a small business owner; a representative of a local school division with a significant enrollment of students in English as a Second Language programs; a health care provider; a representative of a local law enforcement agency; a person with knowledge and expertise in immigration law; a current or former member of a federal law-enforcement agency with jurisdiction over terrorism or homeland security issues; and a representative of a local social services agency or health department. Members of the Commission shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor. The Commission will be overseen by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

This Executive Order shall be effective upon its signing and shall remain in force and effect until June 30, 2009, unless amended or rescinded by further executive order.

Given under my hand and under the Seal of the Commonwealth of Virginia this 1ST day of July 2008.

Timothy M. Kaine, Governor

Attest:

Secretary of the Commonwealth